A Bride's Story

A Bride's Story (Japanese: 乙嫁語り Hepburn: *Otoyomegatari*) is a historical romance manga by Kaoru Mori. It is published by Enterbrain in the magazine *Harta* (previously called *Fellows!*), and is so far collected in 11 *tankōbon* volumes. The manga is licensed in English in North America by Yen Press and was first released in May 2011, with volumes in a hardcover format.

Set in Central Asia in a rural town near the Caspian Sea during the late 19th century, the story revolves around a young woman, Amir, who arrives from a distant village across the mountains to marry Karluk, a young man eight years younger than her. The series then follow their relationship as it develops while other storylines are introduced, each one about young woman and their daily lives with their respective fiancés and husbands, during the 19th century in Central Asia.

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Volume 1 cover, featuring Amir

乙嫁語り (*Otoyomegatari*)	
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Characters

Eihon family

The Eihon family descended from nomads, but have lived in a village for several generations. The family is largely patrilocal, but Yusuf, a son-in-law, married into the family.

Amir Halgal (アミル・ハルガル *Amiru Harugaru*)
: The female protagonist of the story, a twenty-year-old woman and Karluk's bride. She stems from a different (semi-nomadic) tribe. She is skilled in archery, horse-riding and hunting. A free-spirited, adventurous woman, she is more open and outgoing in her day-to-day activities compared with the rest of the women in the family, who are noticeably more reserved. Despite the noticeable age gap between her and Karluk, she genuinely loves him. Unknown to Amir, some of the men she encounters look down on her because she is considered old for a new bride, and long past the traditional age when women in the society have started having children.

Karluk Eihon (カルルク・エイホン *Karuruku Eihon*)
: The male protagonist of the story, Amir's twelve-year-old husband. He is the youngest son of Akunbek and Sanira. He works very hard to be a good traditional husband to Amir, but

because of his young age, he struggles to form a closer relationship with her. Karluk is considered an oddity in that he is younger than his bride; traditionally the bride is usually many years younger than the groom. Some men treat Karluk with pity, since they fear that his wife will be too old when he is mature enough to have children with her.

Mahatbek (マハトベク *Mahatobeku*)
Karluk's grandfather.

Balkirsh (バルキルシュ *Barukirushu*)
Karluk's grandmother who hails from the same clan as Amir and was at least acquainted with Amir's father prior to her marriage to Mahatbek. Naturally, she is very protective of Amir. Like Amir, she is a skillful archer and rider and remains a fearsome individual despite her advanced age. She silences the quarrel between Yusuf and Azel by firing an arrow between them as warning and later kills Amir's father after he attacks their village. She is nonetheless a loving matriarch who practices her own brand of tough love. As a firm believer of the importance of needlework, she guides both Pariya and Tileke in realising both the necessity of the skill and the matriarchal history that is passed down through it.

Akunbek (アクンベク *Akunbeku*)
Karluk's father. Serves as one of the village elders due to his wealth and status. While he is a traditional man, he is also very understanding and very supportive of Karluk and Amir's marriage.

Sanira (サニラ *Sanira*)
Karluk's mother.

Seleke (セイレケ *Seireke*)
Yusuf's wife, and Karluk's elder sister. She is often surprised by Amir's carefree and spontaneous personality. She patiently explains to Amir when their tribal customs differ. Her three sons often exasperate her with their rowdiness but she loves them all the same.

Yusuf (ユスフ *Yusufu*)
Karluk's brother-in-law. Seleke's husband. He lives with his wife's family and proves a loving, though reasonable, father.

Tileke (ティレケ *Tireke*)
Daughter of Seleke and Yusuf, and Karluk's niece. As the elder sister of three rowdy brothers, she is more assertive and bossy around them. She loves falcons and is very talented at embroidering. Her needlework has been praised by many women, including Amir and Balkirsh. She has recently started preparing the fabrics for her dowry and tends to decorate everything with falcons, to her mother Seleke's concern.

Tokcan (トルカン *Torukan*)**, Chalg** (チャルグ *Charugu*) **& Rostem** (ロステム *Rosutemu*)
The eldest, middle and youngest son of Seleke and Yusuf, and all Karluk's nephew. The trio are playful and rambunctious. Rostem often sneaks off to watch the woodcarver work instead of completing his chores and Seleke's attempts at disciplining him often fails until Amir sticks to their word of sneaking Rostem food only once after a punishment. Though not malicious, Tokcan and Chalg can go overboard in teasing Rostem, causing him to cry and prompting Yusuf to step in.

Henry Smith (ヘンリー・スミス *Henrii Sumisu*)
An English traveler and researcher living with the Eihon family. He has been researching the customs, language, and culture of the tribes and peoples.

Residents of the town

Pariya (パリヤ *Pariya*)
A young woman who is introduced in chapter 6; attracted to Amir's free-spirited nature, the two become good friends. Pariya has always struggled to be a traditional woman in the society, but her habit of speaking her mind regardless of situation creates a lot of uncomfortable situations. As a result, she tends to become anxious in social situations, which results in embarrassing outbursts. She is very good at baking and skilled at creating extremely elaborate designs in her bread, which she teaches to Amir. Her father is Togo, a potter, who feels rather resigned at trying to find a suitable husband for his daughter because her outspoken nature tends to scare off potential suitors. This changes when she is

betrothed to Umar, much to her joy, but she becomes anxious trying to act more mature and reliable in order to please him, which sometimes leads to unexpected results.
Pariya also appears in a short-comic spin-off of the series called "Pariya-san wa Otoshigoro".

Chagap (チャガップ *Chagappu*)
An old man who raises sheep, and told of wolves living around Soma Lake. Introduced in chapter 1.

Kamola (カモーラ *Kamoura*)
A lovely young woman in the village, who is well-regarded because she is skillful at domestic tasks and is well-mannered and good-natured, as well as known to have many suitors. Pariya aspires to more like her as she perceives Kamola to be an ideal young woman and tries to discreetly to observe her. When Kamola believes that she has inadvertently angered Pariya due to Pariya's behavior, Pariya admits that she looks up to Kamola, who in turn confesses that she admires Pariya's ability to speak her mind as Kamola often finds she keeps her true thoughts to herself. Through Amir's encouragement, Pariya and Kamola become friends.

Halgal family

The family Amir was born into. They are nomadic during the summer. Introduced in chapter 4.

Azel (アゼル *Azeru*)
Amir's eldest brother, a serious and stoic man. He is a respectful individual who addresses Balkirsh as "esteemed mother" and Karluk as "honoured brother." He is not present during Amir's wedding, a conspicuous absence that Amir's father-in-law brings up. He struggles between loyalty to his clan and affection for his sister. Joruk correctly deduces that Azel deliberately allows Amir to escape because he does not wish to have her married to the Numaji, knowing it represents certain death. Though he does not openly oppose his clan's orders, he has expressed frustration over the decisions of his elders. Although he goes along with the attack on Amir's village, he is quick to defend the villagers the moment his clan is betrayed by the Balkans. Initially mistaken for an enemy, he is saved by the village women's intercession. He becomes the leader of the Halgal clan after his father's death in the battle against Amir's village.

Joruk (ジョルク *Joruku*)
A maternal cousin of Amir and Azel. His clothing differs from Azel and Baimat's because he is a maternal, not paternal, relative. His deadpan sense of humour and preoccupation with food make him appear more flippant than he is. He disagrees with the clan elders on many matters but does not not bother voicing his sentiments because he understands it is futile. This does not stop him from trying to convince Azel to persuade Azel's father, the clan leader, from abandoning the idea to marry Amir to the Numaji as he knows that the Numaji are physically, often fatally, violent to their women. He wants to marry, but understand the current state of his clan makes it difficult to attract any brides.

Baimat (バイマト *Baimato*)
A paternal cousin of Amir and Azel. Unlike Joruk, Baimato is reserved, stoic and dependable. He has a stricter sense of morality compared to Joruk and calls the latter out for filching some apricots from a tree in Amir's village. However, like Azel and Joruk, he privately disagrees with the clan elders. He is shown to be a perceptive and encouraging individual, correctly assessing Karluk's feelings towards hunting and Amir while cheering him up after he makes mistakes while learning to hunt.

Aterui (アテルイ *Aterui*)
One of Amir and Azel's younger sisters. Amir describes her as lively and healthy, recalling that Aterui had never been sick. Her death after marrying the Numaji comes as a sudden shock to Amir but Joruk reveals that she was beaten to death, presumably by her husband. Joruk elaborates that the beating was so severe that her bones shattered while the matriarch Balkirsh confirms that the Numaji are a violent, barbaric bunch.

Karahiga (カラヒガ *Karahiga*)

Another of Amir, Aterui, and Azel's younger sisters. Like Aterui, she dies shortly after marrying the Numaji. She is heavily implied to have been a victim of domestic abuse as well. Her death shocks Amir as well, as she was alive prior to Amir's marriage. Aterui and Karahiga both die within a year of Amir's wedding.

Other characters

Numaji (ヌマジ)
: A clan notorious for their wealth and brutality.

Talas (タラス *Tarasu*)
: A young nomadic woman living with her mother-in-law. Introduced in chapter 12. Married into her current family at age sixteen, but in a few years became a widow of all its five sons as per tradition, which dictates that a widow with no children marries one of her husband's brothers. Since her father-in-law also died, she helps and keeps company to her mother-in-law instead of going back to her own family. She becomes romantically involved with Mr. Smith.

Talas's mother-in-law (タラスの義母)
: An old nomadic woman. She wishes for Talas to have a future with a loving husband and won't accept any marriage offers that would make her daughter-in-law unhappy, including the one from her uncle. She tries to convince Smith to marry Talas, but fails. Later marries Talas's uncle in order to secure a good match for her.

Talas's uncle (タラスの叔父)
: The brother of Talas's father-in-law. A wealthy, aggressive man that wants Talas to be a second wife for his son. He reports Smith to the town's authorities which leads to Smith's arrest and later marries Talas's mother-in-law.

Ali (アリ)
: Smith's guide to Ankara. Introduced in chapter 15. He is associated with the local military, and unabashedly greedy and resourceful, taking advantage of a situation as he sees fit. He is unmarried, but expresses interest in finding a wife when he feels he has obtained sufficient financial stability.

Laila and Leyli (ライラ & レイリ *Raira and Reiri*)
: Twin sisters from a thriving fishing village and are of marriageable age. They are very mischievous and are always together, sharing the same ideas about nearly everything. When Mr. Smith and Ali arrive in their village, Laila and Leyli have been causing trouble trying to find wealthy grooms for themselves who will also bend to their will. Their father later marries the two sisters to the first and second sons of one of his friends.

Laila and Leyli's family (ライラとレイリの家)
: Laila and Leyli's father is a fisherman who is strict with his children. He allows Mr. Smith to remain at his house believing he is a doctor. Though he wants to find good husbands for his daughters, he is reluctant to do so because he worries about the expense of dowries for both of them. The twins' mother, Minah (ミナー), is also very strict with them, often having little patience for their antics and not hesitating to resort to severe methods to ensure they will be good wives some day. However, she cares for them deeply and it is implied she was very much like her daughters when she was young. The girls' family also include several younger siblings, their maternal aunt, their grandfather, and their grandmother, who proves to be very adept at tricking the twins to do household tasks.

Sarmaan and Farsami (サマーン & ファルサーミ)
: Sarmaan and Farsami are the eldest and second sons, respectively, of a fisherman, and both happen to be fishermen themselves. Their father is an old friend of Laila and Leyli's father and the brothers are childhood friends of the twins. When their father suggests having the twins marry the brothers, they are mostly indifferent and admit to have expected it. When their fathers are too caught up with arguing about dowries, the brothers are arbitrarily matched to the twins so they will get to know each other better. Both brothers express a mature attitude towards marriage and with both pairs satisfied with the matches, Sarm is paired with Laila and Sami with Leyli.

Anis (アニス)

The young wife of a wealthy and kindhearted man living in Persia. She is the mother of a young son, Hasan. Smith and Ali are briefly guests in the home of Anis' husband, though Smith never sees Anis herself. Though Anis has everything she could have, she is isolated and lonely until her maid Maarfe encourages her to join her at the public baths. Anis forms an immediate connection with Shirin, with whom she hopes to form a bond of sisterhood with.

Shirin (シーリーン)

A taciturn woman married to a poor man and the mother of a son a little older than Hasan. Shirin becomes fond of Anis, finding her endearing. Shortly after she and Anis commit themselves as sisters, Shirin's husband dies because of an illness. Anis persuades her husband to take Shirin on as a second wife and her family joins the household.

Umar (ウマル)

Pariya's suitor, a young man close to her age whose father raises sheep and runs a traveler's inn. A thoughtful and observant youth, he is skillful at a number of tasks, including calculating figures on an abacus. His father has been searching for a suitable bride for his son for some time and took notice of Pariya when she accompanied the Eihons to find Mr. Smith during his brief engagement to Talas. In contrast to Pariya's other suitors, Umar seems to like Pariya's outspokenness, though she is constantly flustered around him and becomes even more conscientious of her lack of gentle qualities, and Umar's father considers her liveliness to be a positive trait. When her town is severely damaged by the attack from the Halgals, Pariya and Umar's engagement is delayed.

Release

The series launched in *Fellows!* on 14 October 2008.[1][2]

Reception

A Bride's Story placed second in the annual Japanese manga award "Manga Taishō" 2011. It was surpassed by Chika Umino's *3 Gatsu no Lion* by only 20 points.[3] YALSA nominated the first volume for its 2012 "Great Graphic Novels For Teens" list.[4] It also won the inter-générations prize at the Angoulême International Comics Festival in 2012.[5]

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External links

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- *コミックナタリー- [Power Push]森薫「乙嫁語り」第2回*
- *The Bride's Stories* (manga) at Anime News Network's encyclopedia

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